

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY HICKEL ACTS TO IMPROVE FEDERAL-STATE FISH AND GAME COORDINATION

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel announced today that he had signed a new regulation to encourage stronger partnerships between his Department's Bureaus and the various State Game and Fish Commissions across the Nation.

The new policy declaration, covering 540 million acres of Interior-managed lands goes far beyond former documents on the subject, which were concerned mainly with fishing and hunting of resident wildlife on Interior-managed lands. It is being published in the Federal Register as proposed rulemaking. The public is invited to submit written comments within 30 days after official publication.

"We are now formally recognizing the need for cooperation and assistance by Interior in encouraging and guiding the States to plan comprehensively for enhancing their fish and wildlife resources," Secretary Hickel said.

"We know that more effective working relationships are needed. Public recreation demand continues to grow. The needs of the non-hunter and non-fisherman continue to increase. Fish and wildlife know no artificial boundaries between Federal and non-Federal lands and of course they constantly are on the move.

"These regulations--developed with the full cooperation of the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners, at my urging--recognize the aesthetic, scientific, recreational and economic importance of the resources," the Secretary said. "We believe this development is a landmark in Federal-State relationships for the benefit of the public as a whole."

The new regulation applies to all areas administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation.

Public hunting, fishing, and trapping will not be permitted in the National Park System except where provided for by the Congress or authorized by the Secretary.

The Federal agencies are directed to help the States accomplish comprehensive, Statewide resource plans by managing wildlife habitat in cooperation with the States.

In addition, the Interior Bureaus are to consult with the States and comply with State permit requirements in research programs involving the capture, possession, disposal, taking, or introduction of fish or wildlife; and in removal of surplus or harmful populations of fish and wildlife, except in emergencies. The only exception to this general rule would be where the Secretary determines he cannot conform to State practices under his statutory responsibilities.

Exempted from these rules would be migratory fish and wildlife covered by international treaties to which the United States is a party; species of fish and wildlife whose control has been ceded or granted to the Federal Government by any State; and areas over which the States have ceded exclusive jurisdiction to the Federal Government.

The Federal and State agencies are directed to enter into written cooperative agreements embodying these principles when the States desire such agreements. The agreements are to be reviewed periodically by both parties and adjusted to changed conditions when appropriate.

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